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SHAKESPEARE'S 'PATTENS OF BRIGHT GOLD.'

THE commentators find difficulty in *Merch. Ven.* 5. 1. 59. A glance at the Furness Variorum will show that 'patterns' has been suggested for the 'pattens' of the text, as a way out of the difficulty felt by those who see no appropriateness in *patines*. However, if Shakespeare blunders, it is in good company—that of the early Greek philosophers from whom he probably borrowed the conception. In Plutarch's *De Placitis Philosophorum* 2. 14, where he is treating of the opinions of the ancients concerning the stars, he says (I quote from the translation of the *Morals* as revised by Goodwin): 'The Stoics say that the stars are of a circular form, like the sun, the moon, and the world. Cleanthes, that they are of a conical figure. Anaximenes, that they are fastened as nails in the crystalline firmament; some others, that they are fiery plates of gold, resembling pictures.' Here the Greek has: ἔνιοι δὲ, πέταλα εἶναι πύρινα, ὥσπερ ζῳγραφήματα, where there is no mention of gold. It is evident that no other original is needed for the Shakespearean word than the πέταλα of the Greek. Amyot's French translation, which appeared in 1573, had: 'Autres tiennent que ce sont comme lames enflambées, comme des peintures.' Philemon Holland, in 1603, rendered: 'Others imagine that they be fierie plates, like unto flat pictures.' From Amyot, directly or indirectly, Shakespeare could have drawn, had no other access to Plutarch been possible. Plutarch is copied by Eusebius, *Præp. Evang.* 15. 31, and is confirmed by Stob. *Ecl.* 1. 24 (510); (Pseudo-)Galen, *Hist. Phil.* 13; and Achilles Tatius, *Isag.* 12.

Shakespearean parallels worthy of attention are the following :
M. N. D. 3. 2. 187-8 :

Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
 Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.

R. and J. 3. 2. 21-22 :

Give me my Romeo ; and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars.

Perhaps *T. of S.* 4. 5. 31-32 :

What stars do spangle heaven with such beauty
As those two eyes become that heavenly face ?

For the use of *inlay* compare *Cymb.* 5. 5. 351-2 :

They are worthy
To inlay heaven with stars.

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